

What Conservatives Want

Liberals tend not to understand conservatives, and their confusion is showing. On the one hand liberals see conservatives in disarray and react with glee at the fragmentation: the Tea Party vs. Libertarians vs. Neocons vs. Wall Street. Eric Cantor, the Republican Majority Leader, brought down by a Tea Party unknown. John Boehner unable to control his majority in the House. Republican primary challenges everywhere.

On the other hand, liberals are scared stiff of the Koch brothers and other wealthy Republicans bankrolling Republican candidates at every level all over the country. They are scared of a Republican takeover. And they should be.

Which is it?

There are real splits, disputes, dislikes, even hatreds among conservatives. Is it tearing conservatism apart?

Many say yes. The tearing-apart theory is easy to understand and constantly discussed.

On the other hand, it is also possible that the divisions form a system that welds the diverse parts together. And this may be making conservatives stronger at the nexus points, where views are shared, not weaker.

The welding-together theory has not been considered, but it is quite possible that this is what is happening among conservatives, at the systems level. Consider the uniformity of opinion among conservatives on everything from Obamacare to abortion to the Supreme Court's Hobby Lobby decision. It is strong, and there are many instances where conservatives of all stripes are fervently against all liberals and all liberal positions. Where they have found common ground fits consistently within their overriding moral framework, and where they have found common ground, their resolve strengthens.